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ABSTRACT

Painting a picture of the hostile environment in which racial and linguistic minority children live, this paper proposes how educators can become combatants against educational failure that is corrupting the futures and talents of millions of children of color. The paper focuses on the four federally recognized minorities--Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans--who make up approximately 95% of the minority population of the United States and who are underrepresented in educational and economic achievement and overrepresented in poverty, joblessness, educational failure and attrition. Sections of the paper discuss: how educators contribute to student failure; attacks on minority culture from the society at large; the "English only" movement; differential treatment established by traditional school funding; identification of the root cause; how educators can become advocates for minority students; and retrieving the dream of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. (Contains 71 references.) (RS)

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Concept Paper No. 10

Language, Race, and the Politics of Educational Failure: A Case for Advocacy

Roseann Dueñas González
University of Arizona, Tucson

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Language, Race, and the Politics of Educational Failure: A Case for Advocacy

This is my twentieth year as a member of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). Like many other members of NCTE, I entered this profession in the midst of the civil rights movement--an exciting time, a time of hope that change was forthcoming, a time when it seemed that the educational system would finally serve all children and embrace every racial and linguistic group, whether Anglo, Latino, African American, Asian American, or whatever community might be represented in our classrooms. Those were the days when bilingual education was supported as a powerful alternative, when the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) passed the "Students' Right to Their Own Language" resolution (Butler et al., 1974), when modern African American, Native American, Asian American, and Chicano literatures were experiencing a renaissance. We were on the brink of a new day, ready to meet the challenge of leveling the playing field for children of color in education. But as the past two decades have unfolded, our great enthusiasm has been thwarted. For as linguistic and racial minority populations have dramatically increased, society's willingness to extend equal educational opportunities, in both relative and absolute terms, has markedly declined.

A recent report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) marks a new low in our nation's educational report card. Initially these data seem to offer encouragement by noting a decline in the dropout rate among African Americans and Anglos from 1972 until 1991, but in reality the figures obfuscate the problem. Although dropout rates at the national level for African Americans decreased from 21.3 percent to 13.6 percent (NCES, 1992a), state and city statistics tell a different story. For example, the attrition in Washington, D.C., schools was 19.1 percent (1992b)--the highest in the nation, over 50 percent higher than the national average

of 12.5 percent for all children and twice the 8.9 percent national average for Anglo children (1992a). Among the highest in overall dropout rates were Florida (14.2 percent), Georgia (14.1 percent), Tennessee (13.6 percent), North Carolina (13.2 percent), and Kentucky (13.0 percent), directly reflecting disproportionate attrition among African American students in those states (1992b). Even more alarming, the Latino dropout rate actually increased to 35.3 percent in 1991 (1992a). The significantly higher than average dropout rates for Arizona (14.3 percent), California (14.3 percent), Nevada (14.9 percent), Rhode Island (12.9 percent), and Texas (12.5 percent) are also indicative of the excessively high Latino attrition in those states (1992b). For immigrant Latinos now residing in the United States the rate is even higher--43 percent. The rate drops for first- and second-generation Latinos to 17.3 and 23.7 percent, respectively, but is still well above the national average (1992c).

Clearly, Latinos and African Americans are far more likely than Anglo students to drop out of school. But these figures belie an even more appalling truth: of Latino students who enroll in kindergarten in any given year, not even 30 percent will eventually graduate from high school (Shorris, 1992). And, as revealing as these figures are, they say little about the students who do not escape--those who are referred to by teachers in the Southwest as "the dead" (Shorris, 1992, p. 227), those who are virtually marking time in school, completely disengaged, performing below grade level and receiving inadequate preparation in all areas of instruction, particularly in the two critical fields of science and mathematics.

Educators Contribute to Student Failure

José Torres (1991), director of the National Origin Center, cites three school-imposed factors that lead to failure for language minority students: assessment and placement, tracking, and retention. First, many school districts circumvent the need for even assessing students from language minority groups by illegally demanding proof of citizenship, an effective deterrent from attending school. Other schools simply disregard their responsibility for locating students who should be in school by

implementing outreach programs that are perfunctory, at best. For language minority students who are actually able to register, the methods used to ascertain their placement can be decidedly arbitrary, with height and weight often deciding a student's grade level. Erroneous placement due to such methods can have lasting negative educational consequences (Torres, 1991). Even when assessment is done in any sort of formal manner, it is marred by a heavy reliance on standardized testing, the single most detrimental impediment for the educational progress of language and racial minority students. While we know that standardized testing is deficient in ascertaining intellectual ability (Bosma, 1973; Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 1992), and that language minority students lack the requisite, culturally acquired test-taking skills, approximately five million language minority students are assessed by these exams each year (Weber, 1974; Medina & Neill, 1988).

In addition to resulting in unreliable and invalid placement, standardized testing leads to tracking, another albatross for language minority students. Tracking invites categorization and differential treatment, and lowers performance expectations. Consider this: language and racial minority students are only half as likely as Anglo students to be placed in classes for the gifted (Kozol, 1992), yet are overrepresented in special education. Those of us who have worked with these students and have seen them achieve impressive gains with just a little attention find it inconceivable that special education classes are still being used to place, and then conveniently forget, students whose learning difficulties are due to lack of language proficiency. These children are stigmatized, whether the label is "disabled," or just "mildly disabled"; these labels impede many capable students from ever pursuing a quality education (Torres, 1991).

Finally, Torres's study identifies grade retention as a pernicious factor in the miseducation of language minority students. Not surprisingly, studies indicate that grade retention offers few benefits; for example it decreases motivation, self-esteem, and level of achievement, whether measured by grades or by teacher evaluations (Bachman, Green, & Wirtanen, 1971; Walker & Madhere, 1987). And more pointedly, grade retention increases the likelihood of dropping out. Children with

one grade retention have a 40-50 percent probability; those with two, a 60-75 percent probability; and those with three, a tragic 90 percent probability of dropping out (Office of Educational Research and Improvement [OERI] Urban Superintendents Network, 1987).

These findings represent the legacy of past misguided attempts to serve diverse students, and they expose the fundamental inability of our schools to do so. Yet, instead of an in-depth reexamination of our educational process, inexplicably there has been a retrenchment and a penchant in our society to blame the victims--language minority children and their parents. The Reagan-Bush administrations and various right-wing groups have been largely successful in their goal of dismantling bilingual education programs, which have been among the very few positive efforts to teach children in their first language and to reinforce cultures through the study of their literatures and histories (Reagan, 1981). In the spring of 1992, when I participated in a round of proposal evaluations with the United States Department of Education, Office of Multicultural Education, it became patently obvious that the guidelines had changed and that the government clearly favored English Only programs. This was true even in cases where learning could take place in the native language and allow children the time to catch up cognitively and to acculturate to the academic setting. Worse yet, the idea of valuing the culture and the language of these children through bilingual education is being replaced by the multicultural education movement, which is plainly English Only in disguise.

As professionals and researchers, we know that race and language do not prohibit children from becoming literate, educated members of our society. The true prohibitive factor is our inadequate method of approaching these children (González, 1990a). For too long we have chosen the "safe" route of traditional educational processes--processes emanating from an institution trapped by inertia, bound by societal pressures, guided by past dogmas and present fears, blinded by ignorance, and paralyzed by its own failures. Earl Shorris (1992) charges our schools with presenting Latino children and other culturally diverse students with a wall of culture. This barrier separates the teacher from students, the home from school, the

community from teachers and administrators. In Shorris's words, "If they do not overcome it at the beginning, the wall will become higher and thicker with each succeeding day. It is not the making of a metaphor to say that there are no dropouts, only children who did not enter the society of the school" (p. 227). As Robert Kennedy aptly stated in 1968,

> There is another kind of violence, slower but just as deadly, destructive as the shot or the bomb in the night. This is the violence of institutions; indifference and inaction and slow decay. This is the violence that afflicts the poor, that poisons relations between men because their skin has different colors. This is a slow destruction of a child by hunger, and schools without books and homes without heat in the winter. (Witcover, 1988, p. 144)

We, as educators, have yet to learn that we too perpetrate violence on these children every time we conceal the fact that racial and linguistic minorities are treated differently in every aspect of their educational lives, or when we pretend to be unaware of the disabling curricula and the inferior quality of education to which these children are often subjected.

The purpose of this paper is, first, to paint a picture of the hostile environment in which racial and linguistic minority children now live, and why. Subsequently, I will propose how we as agents of the most important societal function--education--can become combatants against the intolerable and rampant disease that is destroying our ability to survive as a nation and corrupting the futures and talents of millions of children of color. It is an urgent plea for us to become advocates for these students, and more importantly to save our country from imminent economic and social turmoil. I focus primarily on the four federally recognized minorities--Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans--who make up approximately 95 percent of the minority population of the United States and who are underrepresented in educational and economic achievement and overrepresented in poverty, joblessness, educational failure and

attrition. These are the people whose roots stem from slavery and colonization, whose lands were taken in the heat of manifest destiny, who have voluntarily immigrated to this country only to suffer extreme racial prejudice, or who have been given political refuge only to become scapegoats.

Ironically, these same peoples whose cultures embody so much inherent wisdom, beauty, and courage are treated with disrespect or pity, instead of with appreciation, empathy, and praise for their cherished values. But how can these students know that we treasure them and their values if we do not take the time to teach them, for example, why Malcolm X and Martin Luther King were more alike than different, or to help them explore the haunting prose of Rudolfo Anaya or Sandra Cisneros, or to understand the politics of the American Indian Movement, and their own native songs and stories?

Our first priority with regard to children of color should be to consider them multidimensionally rather than unidimensionally. At the forefront of our consciousness should be the reality that millions of Latino, African American, Native American, and Asian American children face a societal, economic, and political environment that is far less than friendly.

Hard Lessons in the Society at Large

While children of color may have strong cultural lives and secure values, these are not enough to shelter them from the daily attacks on their culture, their language, and their self-esteem. Parents often cannot provide a shield because they too feel threatened and are battling to provide basic necessities with minimum-wage jobs. They are treated differently at their jobs where expectations and standards are arbitrary, where they endure racial slurs, and where they are silently ostracized. They are deliberately passed over for hiring, promotion, and reward, and they do not enjoy the close camaraderie of their bosses and managers. To their career detriment, they are held back in their jobs and forced to carry interpreting responsibilities for no additional pay. They are viewed suspiciously in stores and they cannot establish

credit. They are treated differently by police and other public agencies and they have diminished access to the legal system. The result is that many of the parents of the children in our schools are so stressed and harassed that they are reluctant to interact with yet another, possibly hostile, institution that does not speak their language. They feel powerless to convince children that gangs will not relieve the complete alienation they feel in American society or the lack of security they feel in their homes.

Unfortunately, this hostile climate trickles down into the sensibilities of racial and language minority children and seriously erodes their self-esteem and thus their ability and willingness to learn. As Earl Shorris asks, "If children accept the vision of themselves projected by the antagonistic world, what hope have they of succeeding in school?" (1992, p. 223). Studying the environments of children of color reveals a dismal picture of struggle and imbalance. From 1979 to 1989, the number of children living in poverty grew to twelve million, an increase of over two million in just a decade. Latino children suffered the largest increase, their poverty rate rising from 28 to 36.2 percent; African American child poverty essentially remained steady at an appalling 43.7 percent (Waters, 1992). These children have already felt the animus and mistrust of the larger society, they have already been typecast by school administrators and teachers, police personnel, store and restaurant clerks and owners, and even other children. They have already begun to internalize the lessons that society is teaching and have generally accepted their scripted roles.

Employment, Housing, and Justice

Racial and language minorities are on the bottom rung of the economic ladder, and unemployment among African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans is rampant. For instance, almost half of all African American males in Los Angeles are unemployed. One-third of the city's population lives below the poverty level, and according to the 1990 census, 20 percent of the city's teenagers are out of school and unemployed (Waters, 1992). These statistics describe Los Angeles *before* the civil

unrest that occurred in May of 1992. This is only one out of many cities in which people of color endure such severe economic conditions.

Increased joblessness, underemployment, and lack of opportunities for job retraining have weakened the economic stability of American families (Greider, 1992). However, the problem is especially egregious for minorities. During the Reagan-Bush administrations, monies that had been traditionally set aside for job retraining were drastically reduced. After the Comprehensive Employment Training Act was replaced by the Job Training Partnership Act, government funding for job training dropped from $23 billion in 1980 to $8 billion today. Homelessness has become commonplace for people of color as a result of an 80 percent cut in federally funded housing programs that has made low-income housing virtually unavailable (Waters, 1992). And the situation is exacerbated by exclusionary practices in the regular housing market. According to a recent study by the Federal Reserve Board on mortgage discrimination, African Americans and Latinos are twice as likely as Anglos of the same income to be denied mortgages ("Fed report," 1992). In addition, the low-wage jobs that most Latinos have do not provide health coverage, leaving them and their families with no access to quality care (Aguilera, 1992).

For language and racial minorities there is a separate administration of justice. An encounter with the law that for the dominant population may be trivial can become a major event that leads to arrest or formal accusation and serious penal consequences, or in many instances, grave physical trauma. An investigation of nearly 700,000 criminal cases uncovered a disturbing inequality: "at virtually every stage of pre-trial negotiation, whites are more successful than non-whites." Of equal concern, one-third of the Anglos with no prior criminal records had their charges reduced, compared to only one-quarter of African Americans and Latinos (Schmitt, 1991, p. 1A). The Federal Judicial Center of the Department of Justice found that the average length of federal sentencing in 1990 was 49 percent higher for African Americans than for Anglos (Meierhoefer, 1992). And as so graphically demonstrated by the Rodney King incident, police brutality is far more likely to be perpetrated against African Americans and Latinos than against members of the Anglo

population, a topic of repeated vocal complaint by civil rights groups for the last twenty years.

Fairness in the legal system has also been abridged for Latinos and other minorities by a recent ruling in the case of *Hernandez v. New York* (1991). The Supreme Court of the United States upheld the ability of a prosecutor to bar two Latinos from a jury panel because they were Spanish speakers. In the original case, the prosecutor used peremptory challenges to remove two prospective jurors because he said they appeared hesitant when asked whether they could adhere to the official English interpretation of courtroom testimony, rather than rely on their understanding of the witness testimony in Spanish. Heavily relying on a brief submitted by the English Only advocacy group, U.S. English, the court ruled 6 to 3 that a prosecutor does not necessarily violate the Constitution by removing native Spanish-speakers from a jury in a case against a Latino defendant; therefore, the right of Latinos to be judged by a jury of *their* peers has diminished significantly.

Discrimination on Campus

Racism on college campuses has further vitiated access to higher education for students of color. An extensive survey-based study of college campuses conducted by the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence indicates that one-quarter of all students of color are targets of racism at least once in an academic year (Ehrlich, 1990). Language and racial minorities represent only a tiny percentage of American university students, yet we are still blocking, rather than facilitating, their recruitment and retention in higher education. I am ashamed to report that stereotypes about students of color are fully operational and biases are regularly acted upon by some faculty at my institution. Even though it is well understood that Latinos, African Americans, and Native Americans are sorely underrepresented nationally in graduate and professional schools (WICHE, 1987), administrators on my campus seem to have no qualms about denying admission to Latino students who have competitive grade averages and respectable experiential records, while at the

same time these administrators publicly announce that they are committed to diversity. When Professor Otis Scott, chair of the ethnic studies department at Sacramento State University, was asked his opinion of the appearance of Ku Klux Klan posters on his campus he responded, "I am more worried about the Klan in doctoral robes" (quoted in Martinez, 1992b, p. 27). How does one fully explain the fact that at the University of Arizona, for example, Anglo students are roughly twice as likely to graduate as linguistic and racial minority students with similar high school grade averages and equal combined SAT scores? (University of Arizona, Student Affairs Research Office, 1991a, 1991b)

An incredible imbalance still exists in the composition of our schooling class--86.6 percent of all teachers are Anglo, 8 percent are African American, only 3 percent Latino, 1.4 percent Asian American, and not even 1 percent are American Indian or Alaska Native (National Education Association, 1992). Yet, intrinsically biased certification examinations have kept an estimated 38,000 minority candidates from entering the teaching profession (Smith, 1987). Is it any wonder that we cannot attract students of color to teaching?

Dismal statistics also abound in terms of recruiting, retaining, and promoting African American, Asian American, and especially Native American and Latino professors throughout the country. Every job announcement is dutifully accompanied by the Equal Opportunity Employment reminder, nationwide searches are conducted, yet not one minority member ever seems to be found. When they are recruited, tenure and promotion are largely denied or delayed, and true acceptance into the respected realms of the academy--such as, for example, the recognition of excellent and distinguished work through the granting of full professorship--is nearly impossible. Administrative appointments are rarer still and often mere tokens. The quintessence of this unequal treatment is the ongoing case of the respected Chicano historian, Rodolfo Acuña, whose appointment was blocked recently by a secret committee at California State University, San Bernardino (Martinez, 1992a).

The English Only Movement

Another volatile ingredient in the hostile sociopolitical environment surrounding language minorities is the English Only movement, which has spread like a cancer throughout our country. Like other xenophobic movements in United States history, English Only seeks to undercut the fundamental constitutional rights of limited- and non-English speakers to participate in our society by denying them access through language. And while leaders of this movement emphasize their salutary intentions, numerous cases have cited its undesirable effects. Members of language minorities are openly reprimanded and suspended for speaking their languages in the workplace. Stones are repeatedly cast at developing English speakers, their lack of English proficiency held up as proof of their alleged refusal to assimilate. They are blamed as the root of our economic, social, and political problems, when, in reality, it is not they who have refused to assimilate, but we who have refused them admittance to our society (González, Schott, & Vasquez, 1988; Marshall, 1986).

This jingoistic movement attracts Americans who fear a future in which political and economic power might be shared by Latinos and Asian Americans. The thinly veiled racial hostility is divisive at best and potentially disastrous if the proposed "Language of Government Act" were to pass as similar bills have already in seventeen states. All of the civil rights protections so valiantly fought for would be in jeopardy should an English language constitutional amendment pass (González, 1990b), and even though House Bill 123 was not addressed by the 102d Congress, it has the backing of 138 representatives and is still viable.

Work Place and Polling Place

Employment discrimination has dramatically increased in the last decade. In times of budgetary recisions, layoffs, and general economic crisis, it is workers of color who tend to be targeted first for severance. Such discrimination is so prevalent that in 1992 the Civil Rights Division of the State of Arizona received over one thousand cases of race discrimination to investigate, the majority of them employment related.

Just recently, a California employment agency has been found guilty of using an intricate set of codes to screen minority workers for its clients, affecting the employment chances of nearly 4,000 potential employees. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is now investigating complaints against employment agencies nationwide that actually specify "no accents," the code for no minorities ("Deciphering," 1992). Language minorities have also been subjected to differential treatment by employers who force them to use their language on the job without appropriate training, testing, and compensation (González, Vasquez, & Wong, 1990; *Cota-Ralls, et al. v. Tucson Police Department, et al.*, 1991).

Employment discrimination on the basis of language is noticeably on the upswing in our own profession. In Westfield, Massachusetts, 403 residents signed a petition requesting a ban on first- and second-grade teachers with "accents." To be exact, the petition demands that no teacher be assigned "who is not thoroughly proficient in the English language in terms of grammar, syntax, and--most important--the accepted and standardized use of pronunciation" ("Ban is urged," 1992). Proponents of this ban were convinced that teachers would impart their supposed pronunciation defects and confusion about English to the children. Accent discrimination has become so prevalent that in October of 1991, the Teachers of English as a Second or Other Language passed a resolution condemning the "native English speaking" requirement that accompanies most job announcements for teachers ("TESOL statement," 1992).

The U.S. political system has, since its founding, consistently blocked access to people of color; even so, over the past decade political gerrymandering has increased dramatically, stoked by the fear that growing blocs of Latinos, African Americans, or Asian Americans might affect the distribution of political power. The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) has been forced to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars challenging municipalities and counties that have participated in this unfair redistricting intended to split the minority vote (MALDEF, 1992). Knowing this, it is neither surprising nor coincidental that the English Only movement is attempting to prohibit printing of ballots in the most

frequently spoken minority language of a given community.

Ground Zero: The Classroom

But nowhere is the hostile climate for racial and linguistic minorities more apparent than in the schools. Jonathan Kozol's recent book, *Savage Inequalities* (1992), unapologetically exposes the tremendous educational disparity between Anglo children and children of color. According to Kozol, de facto segregation of schools is so commonplace that some administrators have given up protesting this gross inequality in order to concentrate on more basic needs. Kozol describes schools in East St. Louis, Chicago, New York, New Jersey, and San Antonio--schools where 25 percent of the teachers are substitutes or non-certified, where classes have fourteen different teachers in a single school year, where books are supplied for less than a quarter of the students, where buildings are literally falling apart, toilets don't flush, drinking fountains don't work, laboratories have no equipment, and where unheated classrooms are so cold in the winter that students have to wear their coats while children in other classrooms swelter as a result of defective heaters that cannot be turned down. Kozol concludes that in these settings, children of normal intelligence, motivation, and aspirations often lose their ambitions and willingness to learn by the fourth grade.

There is no question that the differential treatment established by traditional school funding has become largely acceptable in our society. Kozol found that on a national scale the disparity in spending between schools is enormous--an average of $3,000 per child in schools of color or poor white as opposed to an average of $12,000 in Anglo majority schools.

Kozol reports that in 1988, when the political leadership of Chicago contemplated cutting class size as a number-one priority in an attempt to improve minority education, Assistant U.S. Secretary of Education Chester Finn countered that this was "not a very prudent investment strategy," even though Mr. Finn sent his own daughter to Exeter, where the average class size was thirteen. Education

Secretary William Bennett reinforced Finn by sanctimoniously adding that "you will not buy your way to better performance" (p. 78). This sentiment was echoed by the *Wall Street Journal*, which claimed that "money doesn't buy better education" (Kozol, p. 133). The message was unmistakable: don't waste your money on children of color. While this bankrupt theory negatively affects all students, children of color are hurt disproportionately as their schools plummet into a black hole that can neither be recognized as, nor called education.

Meanwhile, complaints of inequality by parents have gone largely ignored. For example, Demetrios Rodriguez brought suit against the San Antonio school system over inequitable funding in 1968; although change was expected, after twenty-three years of court disputes conditions have remained essentially the same in the poor, largely Latino neighborhoods of Texas. Per-pupil spending of $2,000 in the poorest districts is equivalent to only one-tenth of the spending in the richest districts (Kozol, 1992).

Identifying the Root Cause

We talk a lot about our continuing inability to educate this large and fastest-growing segment of our population. As teachers and scholars, we meet endlessly, create commissions, task forces, and summits. We attempt curricular change, invoke remediation, displace remediation, track, and then mainstream. We hold conferences, seminars, workshops, and institutes. And despite all of these noble efforts, we refuse to accept that the inequities in education, economics, justice, and politics stem from differential treatment of people of color brought about by racism. Our best researchers steer clear of it, obfuscate it, and only occasionally contemplate the tail of the elephant. It's apparent, it's logical; but it's the unmentionable word, because if we say it, we believe it to be our own condemnation, rather than our liberation.

As educators, we are not outraged enough; as a powerful professional society, we have not lobbied enough; and as an institution, we have not faced the truth

enough. We have fallen prey to the alluring movement that tells us that English will solve everything. We have succumbed to the hypnotic lure of multicultural materials, heartwarming discussions of diversity, and the politically correct intellectualizations about canons. Yet we allow our publishing and testing complex to make the decisions for us even when the individual child shows us time and again that the numbers mask his or her true potential.

We have refused to face what I believe to be the fundamental reason for our failure--that this is a country still fraught with racism, distrust, suspicion, fear, and beliefs based on prejudgments, misconceptions, and stereotypes about those who look or sound different. Crago speaks of the "need to become aware of a form of prejudice endemic to much of the education of children from nondominant cultures" (1992, p. 502). This prejudice has a variety of forms; Skutnabb-Kangas refers to the conscious or unconscious rejection of a person's cultural ways or language as ethnicism or linguicism (1988). To counter this institutionalized racism in education we must learn to decipher and decode its symbols and then attack it with every weapon we have at our disposal.

We must disregard any line of research or thinking that places the blame for academic failure on the values, the ways of life, and the languages of these children. This is the deficit model at its worst, identifying all differences as predictable areas of failure, claiming that the children must compensate for the alleged deleterious effects of home, family, and native language. The cultural difference model perceives these differences as strengths to be enhanced and promoted, and contends that while cultural values differ and sometimes conflict with those of the dominant culture, they do not represent deficiencies. What may appear to be deficiencies are the detrimental effects of differential treatment. In other words, the ideal is to notice that these children may not receive the same kind of home support as mainstream children, and to recognize that for these children, home does not always equal security, as it does for most children of the dominant culture.

Courtney Cazden's work, *Classroom Discourse: The Language of Teaching and Learning* (1988), uses this cultural difference model in describing the discourse features of student and teacher talk. Cazden examines cultural differences and their relationship to differential treatment and concludes that when teacher and student social norms conflict, student actions are perceived as soundly inappropriate and deficient, rather than understood as appropriate by different cultural standards. One of Cazden's striking findings is that students are then treated differently based on this misunderstanding; behavioristic, rote learning approaches are reserved for the "learning disabled," while cognitive, problem-solving approaches are used for the "gifted." Cazden comes close to naming the problem when she asks why ethnic differences have to be ethnic borders. Yet Cazden does not pursue the answer by examining intergroup struggles and politics. She does not acknowledge the imbalance of power between institution, institutional agent, and student, nor does she invoke the cultural dominance model that tries to account for the roles of teachers and students in the midst of an ideological institution that is self-interested and distorts understanding. While accurately ascribing adverse consequences to the inability of the teacher to understand and share the perspective of the student, she misses the fact that the difficulty stems from the sociopolitical and sociocultural context of the larger society, and the cultural and racial biases held by the teachers themselves. The children will be more than just culturally different; many "will be poor, alienated, and resistant. They will be troubled, not just because they are misunderstood, but because they understand all too well that things are stacked against them" (Bredo, Henry, & McDermott, 1990, p. 257).

Shirley Brice Heath further obscures the issue in *Ways With Words* (1983). In this richly descriptive ethnography of African American and Anglo working-class communities in Appalachia, Heath attempts to explain the educational and socioeconomic disparities between the two communities, but refuses to confront race as a determining factor. Throughout her description, it is clear that one group came

out of slavery, has barely won some distorted form of equality in the last decade, and is treated disparagingly by members of the dominant community. Yet Heath tells us:

> Any reader who tries to explain the community contrast in this book on the basis of race will miss the central point of the focus on culture as learned behavior and on language habits as part of that shared learning. Children in [Anglo] Roadville and [African American] Trackton came to have different ways of communicating, because their communities had different social legacies. (p. 11)

This extraordinary statement runs contrary to any reader's implicit understanding that a great part of the social legacy of the African American community she describes is the direct result of past and current racism. Heath refuses to frame the issues in the larger social and political context, and thus her work fails as ethnography. She misses the fact that life is much different if you are African American and you have to compensate for that fact in an Anglo society.

But why Heath's fear of stating the obvious conclusion? Could it be that this recognition would make our daily work as educators intolerable because of frustration and personal conflict? Consider the words of Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo (1987):

> This large number of people [in the United States] who do not read or write and who were expelled from school do not represent a failure of the schooling class; their expulsion reveals the triumph of the schooling class. (p. 121)

We shudder as we hear these words, and we silently vow not to accept their meaning. What Freire is telling us is that certain groups are customarily favored by the dominant culture on the basis of their race, age, class, and gender, while traditional routes to power, education, and resources necessary for attainment of critical literacy tend to be blocked for groups that are not favored. Thus, Freire contends that the

"racism, educational tracking, and the systematic negation of their histories" (p. 154) that language and racial minority students constantly endure strongly contribute to an academic performance that is of a lesser quality than that of students of the dominant culture, and to discount this reality perpetuates the inequality. Freire strongly faults American educators for not linking academic performance to the larger reality of the society.

But why is this so? I can only suggest that we are like the prisoners in Plato's allegory of the cave. We are shackled by our own beliefs, by the mores, values, and comforts of our own benefits, and pressured by society into believing that what we see, what we experience every day is reality, when in fact we are only seeing the shadows of our students. Like the prisoners, we have been led out to the light once, maybe even on many occasions--we have met the intolerant teachers, counselors, principals, deans, and parents and heard their racist talk. We have experienced the intransigent policy makers intent on reelection rather than reform, or we have been participants in committees and groups that have created paper goals with no implementation. Outside the cave the truth is inescapable: everything really is stacked against these children. They are treated as abstractions rather than as real persons with educational desires and goals who are overburdened by the larger complexities of their lives in a society that responds disparately to them.

We, like the prisoners in the allegory, preferring the comfortable familiarity of the darkness over the searing reality of the light, refuse to emerge from the cave again. We return to our illogical deductions that explain the behavior of the shadows. We say that these students have a restricted code, that they are semilingual, that they do not speak the proper dialects, that they cannot make inferences and lack the ability to think abstractly, that they cannot learn and their parents do not care. We tell ourselves that the reticent, even belligerent, student just has a bad attitude, or is not interested in learning. We make this conclusion based on our superficial classroom encounters, and then we drive away to our suburban homes, light years away from the ghettos, barrios, or cultural towns of our students. If we were only to ascend to the light we could see the reality that these students are

not reticent, but are defeated by racism. They are not belligerent, but tired of being hurt. They are not uninterested in our knowledge, but desirous for knowledge of themselves. They are not hostile, but angry at continual rejection. They are not bored, but hungry, tired, and worried about their lives.

Yet the invented stories about the shadows persist. Elizabeth Orr's book, *Twice as Less: Black English and the Performance of Black Students in Mathematics and Science* (1987), is a study whose assumptions seem to me to be racially biased and whose outcome can be interpreted as a statement not about the students in the study but about the author's own preconceived notions. The study involved placing African American children from inner city schools into a suburban school and subjecting them to a math and science learning experiment in which they were asked to translate algebraic equations into verbal statements and then explain their reasoning, in writing. The experiment pivoted on Orr's basic assumption that African American inner-city children could not perform mathematical and science operations because Black English vernacular did not accommodate these concepts either grammatically or semantically. She contends that standard English has evolved under the influence of mathematical principles and that therefore speakers of standard English hold an inherent predisposition to mathematical and scientific principles and workings.

The study is not only naive linguistically, but flawed methodologically and pedagogically. Orr's sterile approach to teaching mathematical concepts, her failure to train students in technical vocabulary, and her failure to inform the school and teachers about inner-city youth and Black English vernacular render her findings suspect. Particularly questionable is her contrived assertion that Black English vernacular is a restricted code that prohibits speakers from conceptualizing multiplication and division.

From Geneva Smitherman's work (1981) and that of many other researchers and master teachers, we know that African American inner-city children readily comprehend and manipulate complex concepts when they are introduced in relevant terms based on their life experiences. Jaime Escalante (Mathews, 1988) and many others have proven this empirically for Latino students, while we know from Hakuta (1986), Peal and Lambert (1962), and others that bilingualism actually increases intelligence as measured by nonverbal and verbal intelligence tests. When we place these disparate findings together, side-by-side, it is clear that when we as teachers believe in the inherent ability of our students and when we find effective teaching methods, they do learn!

In *Unfulfilled Expectations: Home and School Influences on Literacy* (1991), Catherine Snow, et al., dramatically detail the emphasis low-income families place on their children's schooling and their resolve to see them obtain a quality education despite societal obstacles. These families have high expectations for their children educationally, but these expectations are undermined *by the school.* Her study reveals that the majority of mainstream teachers do not demonstrate the ability or the interest to collaborate with minority parents in support of the work of their children.

In 1971, Tomás Arciniega presented an innovative plan for change in "Toward a Philosophy of Education for the Chicano: Implications for School Organizations" (cited in Brischetto & Arciniega, 1973). In contrast to the deficit model, the goal of which is to eliminate the ostensibly offensive characteristics, Arciniega posited the cultural difference model as a liberating one that would eliminate racism. In this model, the language and ways of the subordinate culture are seen as positive and equal in importance to those of the majority culture. The subordinate culture is reinforced, not suppressed, by the school when the majority language and culture are taught not as replacements for the subordinate language and culture but as components of a reciprocally beneficial symbiosis. The net result for each student

is two cultures and two languages and the elimination of the irrational hostilities that schools, and society at large, have toward other cultures and languages. Lamentably, this model has been largely ignored.

But we can resurrect the bilingual/bicultural model by our willingness to reconsider and reconfigure what school is and who we are as teachers, administrators, and teacher trainers; by redefining our relationship to the community we serve; and by making explicit our moral and social obligations to students of color. To offer all students an equal opportunity to learn we need myriad sources of assistance--from federal support for education to renewed public support--but most of all, we need a clear vision of our goals: Do we really wish to promote equality for all students, or do we fear the kind of change required to effect a different outcome?

Starting Over

Several groups have made recommendations for school reform to meet the needs of these students. The Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools has identified seven valued outcomes or qualities of schooling: (1) **authentic student achievement**, (2) **equity**, (3) **empowerment**, (4) **communities of learning**, (5) **accountability**, (6) **reflective dialogue**, and the most important of these, (7) **structure and culture**, which refers to the recognition that organizational structures, such as heterogeneous grouping, teacher mentors, longer school days, or team teaching, are unlikely to have an effect unless the cultural values of the institution integrate the values of our diverse students. In other words, schools cannot change until the people who are involved change (Newmann, 1991).

This schema is a step in the right direction, for it recognizes that any new plan to reconfigure schooling must begin with a critical examination of the biases we bring into the classroom, our understanding of student needs, and our goals as educators. To do so is not to admit that we are racists, but to fail to do so is to support the racism that is built into our systems. Until we recognize that our posture toward language and racial minority children correlates with their success, no new plans, no

matter how elaborate, how well funded, how theoretically and politically correct, or how comprehensive will improve the academic futures of these children.

For schools and districts that are obviously not successful in their teaching of racial and linguistic minority children, we need to acknowledge that it is probably more efficacious to start from scratch. After working with a school district in a small, predominantly Latino border town in southern Arizona, I came away convinced that a new start was the only solution. In this district, despite the fact that 95 percent of the children were Spanish speaking, and more than 50 percent of them completely non-English speaking upon entrance, children who had never spoken English before were placed with teachers who were forbidden to speak Spanish. My suggestion that teachers accept their students' papers and journals written in either Spanish or English was viewed as subversive. It was obvious to me that with no cultural, linguistic, or artistic reinforcement of their culture, these children were systematically stripped of their sense of self, which made them unable and unwilling to learn.

As an inservice consultant to the district, I used every factual, practical, theoretical, and rhetorical strategy I had to help these teachers understand their own points of view, to have faith in one another, to accept a vision that might contradict their own, to remind them how important teachers are in children's lives and how they could become catalysts for their students' success. We revisited memories of the teachers in their own past who had sparked a flame in them, and of those teachers who had by design or error extinguished that flame. We explored what these teachers meant in their total educational process. We looked at cultural differences, and studied language acquisition and development. I attempted to extract stereotypes they held about language acquisition and development and to help them discover approaches that were more empowering to their students and ultimately to them as teachers.

My recommendation to the teachers to celebrate their students' culture, to introduce Chicano and Mexican literature and border issues was met with curricular excuses. My plea to read books and poems to and with these students was met with wonderment. The teachers weren't even sure literature was a part of learning

English. As a result, these children were caught in a netherworld in which they were forbidden to speak Spanish and were not really being taught English.

In the eighty hours I spent with these teachers, I did have some successes, some epiphanies, but there was also a lot of frustration, resentment, and even some hostility on their part. I know that out of those seventy-five teachers, thirty seemed ready to modify their approaches, but because the training effort was not sustained and supported by the administration, the school board, and the community, and because class size, resources, and incentives for teachers did not change, perhaps only ten of them did. Unfortunately, many of the teachers and administrators continued in their belief that the parents did not care, that the children were not motivated, and that therefore, they as teachers need not require much from the students or themselves. The attitudes and problems of this district are not unique; they represent many districts and schools I have worked with in Arizona, California, New Mexico, Washington, Oregon, and on the Navajo Nation. I offer this experience as an example of a school setting in which it may be easier simply to start over.

A New Model: Advocacy

Such schools, teachers, administrators, and curricula may not represent you, but they do epitomize many of our colleagues. What I had hoped to help these teachers come to understand, and what I am suggesting now, is that we all must expand our definition of what it means to be an educator--we must, in fact, become advocates for those students most apt to be ignored and discarded by the system.

Another such recommendation for reform is forwarded by Jim Cummins (1989), who presents a four-pronged educational model for language minority children that introduces the concept of advocacy: (1) collaborating with community and parents rather than excluding them; (2) changing the presentation of information from a unilateral transmission approach to a participatory one; (3) changing the traditional focus of knowledge to a focus that is culturally and socially relevant to the children being served; and (4) in terms of assessment strategy, changing the role of

teachers and administrators from gatekeepers to advocates. Cummins's forceful proposal derives from many years of work with language minority students in Toronto, Canada, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He contends that for language minority children, "lack of [second language] fluency may be a secondary contributor to children's academic difficulty, but the fundamental causal factors of both success and failure lie in what is communicated to children in their interactions with educators" (p. 33). Cummins concludes that the quality and tenor of these interactions cause minority children and their parents to withdraw mentally from academic effort. His paradigm holds true for language minority as well as racial minority children, and I would advise that Cummins's model deserves not only implementation, but expansion to engender an advocacy orientation in the entire global school context, to include teachers, staff, administrators, overall philosophy, curriculum planning, assessment, counseling, classroom work, materials chosen for study, extracurricular activities, interactions with parents, and school goals.

Broad-based advocacy would catapult students into achievement and extinguish failure and attrition. If we tried to understand our worst students as we do our best; if we generated a curriculum that students themselves had a hand in; if we collaborated with their parents; if we treated them with acceptance, respect, and yes, even fondness, warmth, and kindness; if we understood something of their language and their culture; if we became politically active with them; if we visited their homes, became their advocates in the school and even in the community; and if we advocated for them when other teachers misunderstood them and resorted to stereotypes--then the outcomes for these children would change.

The National Coalition of Advocates for Students (NCAS, 1991) has also begun to think in these terms. As such, NCAS has offered a set of ten basic entitlements designed to ensure equal opportunity for all students:

1. Children are entitled to have parents, advocates, and concerned educators included in all decisions affecting their education.
2. Children are entitled to learn in an integrated, heterogeneous setting

responsive to different learning styles and abilities.

3. Children are entitled to comprehensible, culturally supportive, and developmentally appropriate curriculum and teaching strategies.
4. Children are entitled to access to a common body of knowledge and the opportunity to acquire higher-order skills.
5. Children are entitled to a broadly-based assessment of their academic progress and grading structures that enhance individual strengths and potential.
6. Children are entitled to a broad range of support services that address individual needs.
7. Children are entitled to attend schools that are safe, attractive, and free of prejudice.
8. Children are entitled to attend school unless they pose a danger to other children or school staff.
9. Children are entitled to instruction by teachers who hold high expectations for all students and who are fully prepared to meet the challenge of diverse classrooms.
10. Children are entitled to an equal educational opportunity supported by the provision of greater resources to schools serving students most vulnerable to school failure: low income, minority, or immigrant students.

These goals, however, will not produce the desired outcome without individual commitments to advocacy. As advocates we must learn to give up our culturally biased ideas and to recognize that different cultural standards are as valid as our own. Most important, as advocates, we must strive to be informed on issues and findings that will complement our efforts in the classroom.

One such finding reveals a reverse reading model for many children of color, that is, children reading to their parents (Tizard, Schofield, & Hewison, 1982). Language minority children often learn English before their parents and become the

brokers between them and the outside world. They interpret for them, read contractual language, help them buy insurance, deal with governmental agencies, and myriad other public interactions. This means that low parental English literacy skills, once seen as impeding the reading ability of children, may actually be the catalyst for accelerated learning. The study finds that parents also foster their children's second-language development, helping in areas where they feel competent. In this model of mutual support, the parent is a collaborator or recipient rather than a unilateral giver of knowledge to the child as in the mainstream home literacy model. Most significantly, the study shows that children who read to their parents on a regular basis make even greater gains than children receiving an equivalent amount of reading instruction by specialists. This is valuable information for schools to build on and incorporate into their curricula; but administrators, as well as community members, must be made aware of its importance in the education of language minority children. This is the challenge for an advocate.

Portrait of the Advocate

An advocate is a champion, a proponent, a backer, a person who pleads on the behalf of another, an intercessionist. Each one of us has needed an advocate at one time or another, as do our students who feel alienated or simply left out. They need an aggressive advocate who will ensure that their best interests and their points of view are always considered over tradition, policy, biases, and ego.

For the student with the raw talent and motivation, who is bright but does not achieve the scores necessary for the gifted program, the advocate would make the case and persist until the child achieved the goal. An advocacy-oriented policy would enable teachers to give all students a chance at AP and other advanced courses instead of relying on test scores to decide the child's fate. Cone (1992) reports that students with combined SAT scores of 700 can learn alongside students with combined scores of 1300 and even pass the Advanced Placement test with scores of four or five. In Cone's words, "I discovered that giving students the chance to elect

to work at the highest academic levels empowers them to see themselves as learners" (p. 717). Traditions need to be challenged. If there is a large student population, shouldn't there be equal or at least proportional representation among students of color and mainstream students in terms of awards, honors, and opportunities?

In 1962, an advocate did just such a thing for a very young Roseann Dueñas, a student at North High School in Phoenix, Arizona. The first semester of my senior year honors English course we had read Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, acted out Johnson's literary circle, read some Lake Poets, written a few essays, and got through some Shakespeare. Gretchen Bock was my English teacher, a known Shakespearean scholar, an Anglophile, and a loving, challenging, wonderful teacher. On report-card day she told me that my research paper could have been better. I was devastated, but willing to accept this criticism as I knew she was right about my paper; I had worked late the week it was due. She didn't question me and she didn't even know that I was helping to support my mother at the time, but she knew of my passion for the subject, and of my desire to become an English teacher. What she did next was a defining moment in my life: she quietly awarded me with a semester grade of **A-**. She told me that she had done so because of my previously consistent high grades and that she would give me the benefit of the doubt provided that I promised to become an English teacher. I was astounded! I thanked her, gleefully promised, grabbed the report card she had prepared for me, and ran home to tell mama about my straight A's.

Ms. Bock's simple act of advocacy has never been forgotten. Knowing that I had a teacher who cared enough to do this for me made me feel special, as if I too counted in a school that was almost entirely Anglo. I recently spoke with Ms. Bock, now in her late seventies, about mentioning her in my paper. After hearing the topic, she commented, "a lot of teachers don't like the children they teach, and that is the problem in a nutshell." She added a caveat about her experience with racial and language minority children. She said, "if they perceive that you are bluffing, that you have actually written them off, it's all over." I don't think it could be better said. This is precisely what has happened to language and racial minority children--they

know they have been written off and they in turn shut us out of their world.

Advocates need to insist that the teachers who are known to hold negative attitudes be monitored, that administrators who hold these same attitudes be told that this is unacceptable behavior. Advocates must refuse to accept the excuse that the curriculum is already too full and all of the other excuses offered for withholding appropriate materials from students in need. What are required are advocates who will insist on and help to implement a curriculum with a strong dose of the literature and language of the predominant racial or language minority groups to which their students belong.

Advocating a Relevant Multiculturalism

Most importantly, we need advocates who will challenge the current focus of the so-called multicultural literature movement, which has become just another way to further exclude language and racial minority children. The original idea behind multiculturalism was admirable: to use relevant literature for students of color in order to reinforce and validate their culture while stressing its importance within the larger dominant culture, and to instill self-esteem by showing these students that their voices are authentic and important, though different from those of majority students. This means a focus on literature and history that pertains to the backgrounds of Latino, Asian American, Native American, and African American students. Constitutional scholar Kenneth Karst (1986) makes patently clear that in order to assimilate successfully into the larger culture, culturally diverse populations must first find and be comfortable with their own cultural identity. As Rudolfo Anaya (1992) contends, denying the many voices a meaningful capacity in the study of language and literature has been costly. He asks us not to ignore the literature of fifteen million people--the Latinos in our culture. Anaya exhorts, "If you are teaching in a Mexican American community, it is your social responsibility to refuse to use the textbook which doesn't contain stories by Mexican American authors. If you teach Asian American children, refuse the textbook which doesn't portray their history and social

reality. . . . If you don't refuse, you are part of the problem" (p. 20).

However, multicultural literature has become a catch-all for world literature, including even the Greco-Roman tradition, as if to suggest that this was somehow missing. Consider the National Textbook Company's advertisement (1992) of the anthology accurately entitled *World Literature*, yet ironically billed as containing the "world's greatest *multicultural* literature" [emphasis added]. Another text, *Across Cultures* (Gillespie & Singleton, 1991), contains selections from thirty-six ethnic groups around the world and in the United States, and *Intercultural Journeys* (Layton, 1991) offers readings from twenty-six countries. But a literary smorgasbord is not what the doctor ordered. Is it not dishonest to tout these world literature texts as reflective of *our* nation's multiculturalism? As Nancy Shapiro (1991) asks in a *CCCC* review of these and other multicultural texts, "Can so many cultures be fairly represented by one or even two selections?" (p. 526). Shapiro discusses the concomitant problem of trying to define an entire culture with one essay, citing the absurdity of an anthology that relegates Chinese culture to one Anglo anthropologist's study of the practice of footbinding.

A better, more relevant approach would be to replace these allegedly multicultural collections and mainstream anthologies with anthologies that feature literature of--and thereby more immediately relevant to--African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos. We can supplement these with literature of any other groups that are represented in the school, the larger community, or the region. This is an idea I have strongly and repeatedly proposed these past few years on numerous occasions (González, 1982, 1990a, 1990c). I again urge that a cultural and sociopolitical reading of relevant literatures is the key to creating the kind of interest and participation we want to see in our minority students. I have seen eyes light up, excitement swell, tears fall, writing flow, discussions spark, and thinking develop when students find themselves and their lives and memories in the pages of their books. It's so easy, and once they understand and exercise their intellect on texts with which they can empathize, it is a mere mental skip to other great

literatures.

Imagine the power of a curriculum that adopts Paulo Freire's rubric of critical literacy--one that blends the real needs and concerns of schoolchildren in their attempts to negotiate their environment for themselves and their parents. Imagine a dynamic curriculum that makes children politically aware and ready to cope, that responds to resources in the community, that involves parents and community leaders, a curriculum that sets the highest expectations for children. Imagine also a curriculum that takes into account popular cultural forms relevant to children--forms such as rock, rap, music videos, movies, and television--in order to build a solid base for developing literacy.

As Freire and Macedo (1987) point out, the alleged illiteracy is actually the students' reaction "to a curriculum and other material conditions in schools that negate their histories, cultures, and day to day experiences" (p. 121). The new curriculum would not only focus on the histories, literatures, and specific cultures of students, but also to general popular culture and selected mainstream history, literature, and ideas. As Peter McLaren so lucidly states, "To ignore or dismiss as barbaric popular cultural forms such as rock music or music videos is to erroneously deny the relationships which obtain among popular culture, student experience, and the construction of ideological codes governing reader reception" (1991, p. 227).

It reminds me of the time when, as a young student teacher in 1970, I was experiencing great difficulty with one of my classes that happened to be 90 percent Latino, Native American, and African American. After a lot of frustration and failure, I gave up trying to interest my students with the prescribed regimen of classics and taught rock lyrics as poetry. My university supervisor admonished me when she found that I had done so. I explained to her that my students first needed to explore topics that were closer to their experiences. I needed to reach them in any way I could or we would lose them. I agreed that perhaps *Hamlet* would be meaningful to these students later, but not yet.

She never really understood, but the other teachers at my school certainly did. When they saw how excited my students were, they asked me if they could borrow

my materials for their classes. My students were interacting, discussing, arguing, writing, thinking, creating, laughing, and learning--a far cry from the lethargy, disinterest, apathy, and surliness I believed they had displayed previously. We can still use the traditional curriculum selectively along with materials that are meaningful to the experiences of students. It's a matter of courses, in my mind: appetizers, salads, soups, entrees, and desserts, each one important in its own right, some more appealing to some students than to others, but all part of an integrated whole, offering variety and sustenance. Most of all, such a curriculum will inspire self-esteem, motivation, and success, and result in real knowledge and skill.

Retrieving the Dream

And so in the short period of a generation, in the blink of an eye, we again stand together at a new threshold--once more we pause to look into the future. The 1990 Census reveals that while the Anglo population has increased by 6 percent since 1980, the African American population has grown by 13 percent, Native Americans and Alaska Natives by 38 percent, Latinos by 53 percent, and the number of Asian American and Pacific Islanders has more than doubled, increasing by 108 percent (Waggoner, 1991). And, because these minority groups are younger than the majority population, the makeup of school-age children is even more diverse than the overall population. For the past two decades we have intellectualized the problem, we have studied to death the reasons why. Now in the next two decades let us spend the same energy, persistence, and resources on action. Let us be advocates and create radical new curricula that will challenge the formidable problems our students and our country face.

An internal agenda through revised curricula, though, is not enough. As advocates, we must have an external agenda as well. We must be able to articulate, both pedagogically *and* politically, what is wrong and what is needed. We must make our colleagues and the public aware of the insidious nature of institutionalized racism, and of what it means for our future as a nation to lose half our resources

because we fail to invest in them now. We must infuse the new national standards for English with this viewpoint and guarantee that the framework for teaching English in American schools will help students to know themselves before stretching out to know others. We must question all of our efforts and ask ourselves if we are doing everything that we can do. We must join with parents and community leaders to lobby for change, we must become politically active, we must argue, we must influence policy, and we must lead others out of the darkness of the cave to face reality with compassion, understanding, and vigor. And we must start, here in our own organization, to be watchdogs and advocates for students who have no voices, no power, and no prestige--only potential, and the hope that we might help them tap it.

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